(b) whether it is also a fact that despite these increases, four out of five steel plants attached to the Steel Authority of India Limited are incurring losses; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor and in what manner it is proposed to meet these losses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STEEL IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI YOGENDRA MAKWANA): (a) There has been an average increase of abut \15.6% in steel prices. These were revised by the Joint Plant Committee w.e.f. 24.12.1987.

(b) and (c) The profitability of SAIL's plants will be known only after finalisation and audit of the accounts for the current year.

470. [*Transferred to the 1st March*, 1988]

Attending to the Complaints by the CPWD in Laxmi Bai Nagar

471. SHRI PRITHIBI MAJHI: Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that complaints lodged by the residents of Laxmi Bai Nagar, New Delhi, with its CPWD Civil and Electrical Enquiry Office, are not being attended to for the past one month;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to ensure that these complaints are attended to and to update the stores of above Enquiry Office?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) to (c) All the complaints are being attended to regularly and promptly. There is also no shortage of any building material in the Enquiry Office.

Rise in the Prices of Essential Commodities

472. SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the rate of increase of the prices of essential commodities, both wholesale and retail since December, 1987 and the reasons thereof; and

(b) the measures taken by Government to contain it?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): (a) Relevant information is given in Statement-I and Statement-II. [*See* Appendix CXLV, Annexure No. 19] in respect of wholesale and retail prices respectively.

(b) Government has taken a number of measures to contain rise in the prices of essential commodities and improve their availability. The main thrust of the Government policy has been to increase production of various essential commodities, particularly those which are in short supply. Other measures include import of some essential commodities to augment domestic supplies, regulating export of some essential commodities, strengthening and expanding the Public Distribution System and strict enforcement of provisions of Essential Commodities Act and similar legislations against hoarders, black-marketeers by the State Government/UT Administrations.

On account of widespread drought conditions prices in general have been under pressure. To meet the situation, Chief Ministers of States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories have been urged from time to